W A T C H E T. U.D.B

REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH for the year 1925.

NATIONAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area Acres 493.

Population. 1839.

Physical Features and general character of the Area.

Watchet is a town situated on the Bristol Channel facing due North. It is bounded on the south and west by low hills, which are separated in the south-west by a narrow valley.

To the east the town is open.

The sea front is mainly taken up by a harbour backed by a broad esplanade.

The old town, which lies nearest the harbour, consists of narrow tortuous streets, and is divided by a moderate sized stream. The newer quarters which lie south of a railway line, which cuts the town in two, is better arranged, the streets being wider, and the houses better spaced, though there is no attempt at town planning.

The town, save in the old portion, gets a good share of sunlight, but is much exposed to north-westerly and easterly winds.

No. of inhabited houses. 481

No. of separate occupiers. 510.

Rateable value. £5901.

One penny rate produces £21.

Social Conditions. The chief occupation of the inhabitants

is paper making, the Wansbrough Paper Mill being situated in the valley at the south-west of the town.

Apart from this there are a certain number of sailors, harbour employees and agricultural labourers. There is no occupation which shows definite influence on public health.

Vital Statistics. The total number of births for the year was 35, which is a marked increase on previous years. Of these 17 were male and 18 female.

There were deaths 30. Male 15. Female 15.

Deaths of children under one week.		One
" " "	one week to four weeks.	Nil
" " "	four weeks to six months.	Two
" " "	six totwelve months.	Nil

I would like to point out that out of the remaining 27 deaths for the year, three were due to Tuberculosis and six to Cancer. There was an epidemic of Scarlet Fever during the year, 28 cases being notified, but I think it is undoubted that there were many more cases than were seen. This was probably due to the very mild form of the disease. There were no deaths, and very few complications.

Apart from these points, the health of the town was very good.

General Provision of Health Services of the Area. The Isolation Fever Hospital is subsidised by the local authority.

The County Council provides treatment for Tuberculosis.

The General Hospitals available for the area are Minehead & District, eight miles, and Taunton Hospital, eighteen miles.

There is no other Institutional Provision.

Ambulance Facilities. An Ambulance in charge of the Minehead branch of the Stl John's Ambulance Association is available at a fee of One shilling a mile.

The Fever Hospital transport patients in their own Ambulance.

Clinics and Treatment Centres. Tuberculosis dispensary and treatment centre for venereal disease are stationed at Minehead, eight miles. There are no other Clinics.

Public Health Officers of the Local Authority. Part time Medical Officer of Health and part time Sanitary Inspector. Contribution to the salaries of both these is made by Exchequer Grants.

Professional Nursing in the Home. There is a nurse stationed in the town for Maternity and General work, affiliated to the Nursing Association, but independently of the Local Authority which does not contribute.

Midwifes. There are two midwifes practising in the area, but they are independent of the local authority.

Chemical Work. Any such would be referred to the County Laboratory.

Sanitary circumstances of the area.

Water. Water to the entire town is supplied by the Watchet Water Company directly to the house.

The supply is intermittent.

The source is by spring at the foot of the Brendon Hills There is very little likelihood of contamination, save by breakage of pipe, or in reservoir. A specimen is sent at intervals to the Somerset County Council Laboratories for examination.

Rivers and Streams. A stream runs through the town. Occasional pollution by dye from the paper mills has taken place.

Drainage and Sewage. The town is drained by three main sewers which discharge their contents into the sea. Two in harbour and one outside west pier.

Closet Accommodation. Chiefly water closet. There are, however, 53 washed by hand-carried water.

Scavenging. House refuse is removed by cart twice a week and deposited at a dump on a hill outside the town. Moveable ashbins are in use throughout the town, but these in many cases have no proper coverings.

Sanitary Inspection. Three premises were visited for defects in the cisterns in water closets. Action was taken to have these remedied, which was done.

Smoke Abatement. Action - Nil.

Schools. Sanitary condition and water supply good.

School children inspection takes place by Mr School Medical Officer.

For prevention of infectious disease reports between School Authorities and Medical Officer with exclusion when necessary.

Housing.

1. General Housing Conditions (a) Shortage by at least Fifty houses (b) Private enterprise with Government subsidy.

2. Overcrowding.
   (1) Extent considerable in some areas.
   (2) Cause - increasing families. Marriages.
   (3) Measures taken for dealing with overcrowding. See 1 (b).
   (4) Principal cases of overcrowding during 1925. Taking of lodgers. Letters were written calling on Landlords to abate the nuisance. Where possible this was successful, but some tenants refused to leave.

3. 1. General Standard of Housing. Good.
   2. Action taken as regards unfit houses. None so found.
   3. -
   4. -

4. Unhealthy Areas. No complaints received.

HOUSING STATISTICS.

Number of new houses erected during year.

(a) Total 6

(b) With State assistance under Housing Act.

1. By local authority. 6.

2. By other bodies or persons Nil.

1. Unfit dwellinghouses. Nil.

(1) Total number of dwellinghouses inspected. Nil.

(2) Number of dwellinghouses inspected and recorded under Housing Regulations 1910 or 1925. Nil.

(3) Number of houses found to be in a state dangerous or injurious to health. Nil.

(4) Number of dwellinghouses found not to be reasonably fit for human habitation. Nil.

2. Remedy of defects without service of formal notice. Nil.

3. Action under Statutory Powers. Nil.

INSPECTION & SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

(a) Milk Supply. The milk supply of the town is sound and wholesome, and the arrangements for distribution adequate.

(1). Action taken with regard to Tuberculous cattle or milk. None required.

(2). Licenses granted for sale of milk under special designations. Nil.

(3). Refusal or revocation of registration of retailers or licenses for graded milk. Nil.

(a). The number of milk producers on the register is three.

(b). The number of distributors. Five.

There are no distributors who are also producers.

(c). The register is complete.

Meat.

1. Inspection. Slaughtering takes place at stated hours. It is open to any of the Sanitary Staff to attend.
2. Shops where meat is sold are now glass fronted and enclosed.
3. There is no public slaughterhouse.
   Private slaughterhouses are three. Two registered and one licensed.

PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

There has been no prevalence of notifiable disease since 1920, except ~~xxxxx~~ that as stated in previous reports. The incidence of Tuberculosis is high.

One case only of Encephalitis Lethargica has occurred since 1920.

Diptheritic Antitoxin is supplied free by the local authority and is in the charge of the Medical Officer of Health.

In all cases of Diptheria, it has been invariably used at once.

There have been no cases of Malaria, Dysentery, Pneumonia or Trench Fever.

Pathological or Bacteriological specimens are examined at the County Laboratory, Weston-super-Mare.

No use has been so far made of the Schech or Deche tests.

Vaccinations performed.

(1) Primary - One

(2) Re-vaccinations - Nil.

I may point out that this is an absurdly low percentage as to the births.

There are no facilities in the area for the cleansing of verminous persons and their belongings.

Disinfection of premises is carried out by means of Fumes or Spray.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

Scarlet Fever.	28
Chicken Pox	17
Erysipelas.	2
Others	Nil.

TUBERCULOSIS.

New Cases and Mortality. Five fresh cases. Three deaths.

Age periods	New Cases				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary		Non-pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0								
1								
5								
10	one		one					
15								
20	one							
25								
35			one					
45	one							
55								
65								
	3		2					

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URBAN DISTRICT OF WATCHET.

R E P O R T

of Medical Officer of Health. . .